

**VILLAGE OF GRAFTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
APRIL 21, 2026
7:30PM**

Present for roll call were Romes, Campbell, Kitts, Kilgore, and McCort. Also present were Mayor Duke, Village Administrator Andrew Lipian, Law Director RJ Budway, and Clerk-Treasurer Hilary Whitesel.

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES

McCort makes the motion. Kilgore seconds. Vote: All AYES

MOTION TO PAY BILLS

McCort makes the motion. Kilgore seconds. Vote: All AYES

MOTION TO READ ALL ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS BY TITLE ONLY

McCort makes the motion. Kilgore seconds. Vote: All AYES

MAYOR'S UPDATE

CSX is in the process of ordering material for the repairs. He's got the three bands already locked in for our 4th of July Parade and Celebration Day. There are fireworks donation envelopes going out.

CLERK-TREASURER'S UPDATE

She has been going through stacks of bills and has been paying for all of the ones that we can find. She's been getting a lot of the late fees waived so the village can save as much money for the government. If anybody knows anything about additional bills, please have them contact Hilary directly and send a paper bill, not an email, as she is not always receiving those.

POLICE

The Benevolent Society of Police Department has purchased two electrical bikes for patrol. They should be coming in soon; then the team be trained in them.

FIRE

Within the next couple weeks, they will find out from ODRC about possibly getting 25 radios donated to us for the MARCS program, along with extra batteries and chargers. Run numbers, 143 for the year, 27 mutual aid gives, seven fire, 15 EMS, with 5 requests by our agency. They are still going to continue to have trainings on Mondays.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Joe Connectus – In regards to property transfer in the Lorraine Journal. West Creek Conservancy sold property at Willow Street to Willow Prince, LIC, for \$650,000. It is assumed by the speaker LIC wants to build houses there.

The mayor states the land was sold to the conservatory, and it appears like they sold it back. It is unknown what will happen. He is just going to have to wait until that paperwork comes down the pipe to see what the intentions are. He would assume he probably wants houses as that's what he wanted the first time around.

Cassie Crix – The speaker, a longtime resident of Grafton and the spouse of a retired assistant fire chief, addressed the village council regarding the decision to remove daytime staffing from the fire department. She explained that before staffing was implemented in 2024, emergency response times ranged from 12 to

14 minutes, but have since improved significantly to about three and a half minutes—an improvement she emphasized as critical to saving lives.

She noted that staffing allowed the village to stop relying on an outside ambulance service, keeping both funding and control within the community while improving care. At the same time, call volume has been steadily increasing, reflecting the village's growth and rising demand for emergency services.

She highlighted that while firefighters train regularly and are dedicated, a volunteer-based system alone cannot guarantee consistent response, making staffed positions essential. She also clarified that the 2024 budget only provided for a small on-duty team, not a large daytime staff as previously suggested. She raised concerns about low wages, particularly for the fire chief and first responders, which are significantly below those offered in neighboring communities, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified personnel.

Finally, she argued that the decision to remove staffing appears to stem from a technical issue with how the budget was documented, which she said is the responsibility of the council—not the fire department. She concluded by stressing that emergency response is a matter of public safety, urging officials to reconsider the decision and prioritize the well-being of residents.

Jennifer Filipiak - Jennifer Filipiak, a resident of the community since 2000, addressed the village council to express concerns about transitioning back to a fully volunteer fire and EMS department. She acknowledged the difficulty of the council's decisions and expressed appreciation for their service, while seeking clarity on how the transition will be managed.

She cited a 2022 Ohio task force, created by Governor Mike DeWine, which found that fully volunteer departments tend to have longer response times. She emphasized that in Grafton, response times previously ranged from 10 to 14 minutes under a volunteer system but improved to about 3.5 minutes with staffing—highlighting the potential impact on emergency outcomes.

While she recognized there may be ordinance or procedural issues to resolve, she questioned why staffing was removed if funding had already been allocated in the 2026 budget. She expressed concern about maintaining reliable response times during the transition, particularly during daytime hours when volunteers may be unavailable due to full-time jobs.

She also raised concerns about the financial impact on residents if neighboring departments must respond. She noted that non-residents may be billed the full cost of services, which could place a burden on Grafton residents relying on outside assistance.

She concluded by emphasizing that the issue involves not only response times but also access to and affordability of emergency care. She urged the council to clearly communicate their plan for maintaining consistent coverage, outline a timeline for resolving staffing and ordinance issues, and explain how residents will be protected both medically and financially during the transition.

RESOLUTIONS

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING A CONTRACT EMPLOYEE FOR A PART-TIME POSITION TO ASSIST THE VILLAGE TREASURER FOR THE VILLAGE OF GRAFTON AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY
Romes makes the motion to add this item to the agenda. McCort seconds. Vote: All AYEs

McCort makes the motion to suspend the rules and declare an emergency. Campbell seconds.
Vote: All AYEs

Kilgore makes the motion to pass. McCort seconds. Vote: All AYEs

*RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CHANGE ORDER TO THE CONTRACT WITH KLEINFELDER, INC.
FOR THE VILLAGE OF GRAFTON ENVISION WAY FINDING AND TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS
PROJECT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY*

Kilgore makes the motion to suspend the rules and declare an emergency. McCort seconds. Vote:
All AYEs

Romes makes the motion to pass. McCort seconds. Vote: All AYEs

ADJOURNMENT